

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHP ANNOUNCES MAJOR TRUCK ENFORCEMENT EFFORT

SACRAMENTO, May 11--Large trucks will earn closer California Highway Patrol scrutiny in a major enforcement emphasis starting this week, Commissioner D.O. "Spike" Helmick announced. Rules of the road violations, particularly speed, will be a major focus. "Public, legislative and industry concerns have been increasing. Trucks are the subject of more letters than any other topic," he said.

The commissioner instructed the eight CHP field divisions to develop individual programs tailored to local needs. One division plans an 800 hot line for public reports of truck violations. "If that brings a heavy response we may look at a statewide number," Helmick said.

The Highway Patrol's traditional emphasis on commercial vehicle mechanical reliability has been effective in reducing the ratio of crashes where a truck defect is the primary cause to about 3 percent. "Now we need to direct more attention to drivers," Helmick said. "Recent research indicates that fatigue is a factor in a significant number of truck accidents. We will look more closely at driver hours of service and driver condition."

Truck fatal and injury accidents have been fairly constant for the past six years, and even though increased truck mileage means commercial vehicle crash rates are down, the "declines are less than for other types of vehicles, which in recent years have recorded significant drops in both fatal and injury crashes," the commissioner said. "That differential suggests we should increase our concentration on truck violations," the commissioner said.

Helmick expressed pleasure that the California Trucking Association (CTA) "fully supports our safety objectives. CTA executive vice-president Joel Anderson tells me the tenor of his correspondence parallels ours. CTA wants truck speeds down and drivers scrutinized more closely. Their association is strongly committed to truck safety."

Highway Patrol commercial vehicle experts have drawn a list of potential truck enforcement activities, including:

M O R E

Expanded use of specially marked patrol vehicles (usually all white), less easy to identify than black and white patrol cars. Standard patrol cars kept at major truck inspection facilities may be converted to specially marked cars.

24-hour, seven-day operation at port of entry scales, and greater flexibility in scheduling operating hours at other scales to reduce predictability.

More innovative use of strike forces, including setting up strike forces at scales during off-hours to conduct checks of truck driver hours of service, medical certificates, driver licenses, and physical condition.

Installation of radar in vehicles used by roving commercial officers, and in specially marked patrol vehicles.

Increased flexibility in hours and geographical areas covered by roving commercial officers, to reduce truck circumvention of scales.

More aerial enforcement against truck violations

Added educational and instructional programs, conducted jointly with CTA, to increase trucker awareness of problems and appropriate corrections.

Re-emphasis of the 'No-Zone' campaign, which advises other drivers of truckers' blind spots, and how to stay out of them.

Commissioner Helmick said he "knows this effort will be called a crackdown, but we have always emphasized truck safety. Our efforts focused on the vehicle. Now we're shifting more attention to drivers."